

THE CZECH REPUBLIC: 2016 – A LAND OF STORIES AND WELL-GROWING ECONOMY

Nanda Jagusiak-Monteiro interviews the Ambassador of the Czech Republic, H.E. Ms. Jana Reinišová

Former posts: Director General for Legal and Consular Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deputy Permanent Representative EU Brussels, several posts at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs mostly related to the EU.

1. You have been the Ambassador to the Netherlands since February 2015. How do you experience it?

The Netherlands is a country which is quite close to us, we have much in common even through history. The way of living here is very pleasant. I like the Netherlands, its culture, countryside and people. I have always had a very good cooperation and friendly relations with my Dutch colleagues and the same goes for my stay here.

2. The Netherlands “rediscovered” the Czech Republic in 1990 after the so called Velvet Revolution, due to President Vaclav Havel, who would be 80 this year.

I have to start with appreciation of the support of democratic movements in Czechoslovakia even during the “communist” regime by Dutch people and politicians such as Mr. Van der Stoep, to name at least one of them. Mr. Václav Havel was a great personality who helped very much in destroying the old order and introducing the democratic system in former Czechoslovakia. He was well recognized abroad and thus contributed significantly in re-establishing relations with other countries. His name opens the doors even today. This year we are commemorating the Havel’s legacy by a number of events, here in The Netherlands together with the Czech Centre

e.g. by debate and exhibition of his photographs at the Hague’s Nieuwspoor, competition in translation of Havel’s texts or performing his play Memorandum at the University of Amsterdam.

3. The Netherlands is one of the Czech Republic’s main trading partners. What are the reasons and how do you see their development?

We are both industrial countries, although The Netherlands has got a larger share of services. Our main trading partner is Germany and a big share of our exchange goes indirectly via German products, e.g. many Czech automotive parts and Dutch microchips are exported in German cars worldwide. “Traditional” bilateral trade is also significant, The Netherlands are the top 9th partner of Czechia. As far as the future is concerned, there are good prospects for the growth of our economies (Czech over 2,5 % of GDP and Dutch 1,7% in 2017), and thus promising prerequisites for strengthening our economic relations. The most perspective branches are: advanced automotive (Skoda), high-tech mechanical and electrical engineering, ICT & software products and services, aerospace, life sciences or nanotechnology.

4. What is meant by V4 Startups & Scale-ups 2016 (V4S)?

This is becoming a tradition, there were two such events of Visegrad Group (The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia), first in 2014, second this year and next one is planned for 2017. V4 Startups in the Netherlands is a networking and information platform showcas-

ing innovative startups and other investment opportunities from the dynamic sectors of V4 countries. It is organized by V4 Embassies in cooperation with other partners. This year, under the Czech V4 Presidency, it preceded the Startup Fest Europe. The keynote speakers were HRH Constantijn van Oranje and Don Ginsel (Founder of Holland Fintech). The sector of Robotics & Artificial Intelligence was chosen for Czech startups in 2017.

Other activities which help strengthening relations between Czech and Dutch companies are the business mission to the International Engineering Fair in Brno, organized by the Czech-Dutch Chamber of Commerce, or the “B2B Seminar of Czech ICT companies”, held as the project of economic diplomacy organized in cooperation with Czech ICT Alliance, Czech Trade and cosponsored by Unicorn Systems.

5. How important is the Czech Comenius to your country, a well-known philosopher, scholar, bishop and educator who died in Amsterdam in 1670. And what about the Comenius Museum in Naarden?

Comenius is part of our history and culture, but not only ours. His influence can be seen in Europe even today – his philosophy, teaching methods, humanism. We can still learn something from him and that is what the Museum is not only to secure, but also to link up to the present times. The Czech Republic has been supporting the Museum, including the grave of Comenius, since 1920 and there is a close cooperation with the Comenius Museum in Uherský Brod.



H.E. Mrs. Jana Reinišová

6. The world-famous Czech designer Borek Šípek passed away this year. How important was he to the Netherlands and to your country?

There was an intention to organize his exhibition in Comenius Museum in Naarden, unfortunately he died the same day on which the opening of the exhibition had been planned. Hopefully it will be possible to organize it next year. Borek Šípek was a well recognized artist in many countries, including The Netherlands, where he lived for more than a decade. He returned to the Czech Republic after the Velvet Revolution and helped President Havel as a Chief Architect of the Prague Castle. His mastership can be admired all over the world.

7. Are there many tourists visiting your country and what about the Dutch?

The Czech Republic attracts more and more foreign tourists every year, last year it was up to 9 million. The number of Dutch tourists has increased during

the past years as well, in 2015 it was 209 000. The majority of them spent an active holidays in the mountains, or by exploring the beauty of the Czech nature or historical monuments. The Czech Tourism agency with its branch in Amsterdam ensures the presentation of Czech Republic as a pleasant touristic destination.

8. Which highlights can you suggest the reader to visit in the Czech Republic?

The Czech Republic is not only Prague which is quite well known worldwide. I would suggest to visit more of our country. It offers many wonderful places with a combination of historic monuments, charming nature with deep forests, lakes and vineyards, or mountains. To enumerate some of these places I mention e.g. Český Krumlov, Karlovy Vary, Kromeriz, Olomouc, mountains like Sumava or Beskydy.

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